

SPORTS

Tough decisions for GM as Spirit season looms

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

When Mark Joslin became general manager of the Stouffville Spirit earlier this year, he knew there would be challenges.

That included the end of the pre-season when the roster has to be pared down.

While those moments do not present sleepless nights for Joslin, he acknowledged they can be tough to handle.

It's, especially hard on players who dedicate themselves to training camp over going with a rival club, only to be cut.

"It's definitely a tough time of the year for sure because a player has committed themselves over the summer and, even at the end of the day, if you don't see the player as a fit for your team you don't want to leave them high and dry. You want to get them somewhere," Joslin said. "It can be a nerve-wracking time. But it's a part of the territory. It comes with the job."

SMALLER, YOUNGER ROSTERS

And there's the new Central Division's rule that each club must have two 1992-born players.

"That will make things difficult to put our puzzle together. It changes the entire outlook of our team," Joslin said. "If a player isn't a top-six guy, he might have to sit out a game for a 1992-born player."

Plus, each team will only be allowed to dress 19 players per game, down from 20 last year.

Joslin is leaning towards going with 11 forwards and six blueliners, but could use 12 forwards and five defencemen.

"What we have to do now is to sit down and talk with each of the players and explain their roles with the team," he said. "I might have a 1989-born guy who won't accept being a third- or fourth-line guy."

Since the Spirit do not begin their regular season until next Thursday, Joslin has some time to whittle down his final roster.

He has finalized his goaltending situation by naming Mike D'Angelo

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as the back-up to Michigan native Joe Moore.

D'Angelo played last season with the Markham Majors midgets and recently returned from the Barrie Colts' Ontario Hockey League camp.

"We feel he's a young kid who is willing to work at trying to make the next level. We want him to push Joe Moore and learn from him as well," Joslin said of the 1991-born D'Angelo.

The Spirit will take part in three home openers in four days next week. Stouffville and Newmarket open their season Sept. 11 at the Stouffville Arena then do it again Sept. 14 at the Ray Twinney in Newmarket.

The Spirit helps Markham kick off its home schedule Sept. 12 at Markham Centennial arena.

The Spirit concluded its pre-season last Friday with a 7-5 road loss against the Aurora Tigers.

Don Maloney scored three goals for the Spirit, who led 4-1 with 10 minutes left in the second period before they collapsed. Bryant Doerrsam and Matt Viola added singles.

The day before, the Spirit played host to the Tigers and skated off with a 4-2 win.

Viola, Josh McIntosh, Chad Beal and Maloney scored for the Spirit.

The Spirit went 3-1 in the pre-season.

"No question I was happy," Joslin said. "If we had played a full game Friday in Aurora we would have gone undefeated. But sometimes it's not bad to lose because it puts things in perspective. All in all, I thought we had an excellent pre-season."

While Joslin expected big things from his goaltending and defence during the pre-season, what pleased him foremost was the performance of the young forwards.

"The young guys stepped up and exceeded my expectations because I thought with all of the firepower that we lost from last



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Matt Viola (right) of the Stouffville Spirit battles for the puck with Jon Memme of the Aurora Tigers during the Tigers' 7-5 win in Aurora Friday. The Spirit, which went 3-1 in the pre-season, opens the regular season next Thursday at home to the Newmarket Hurricanes.

year we would have been challenged. They played well," he said of his first-year players.

OHL PROSPECTS RETURN

The Spirit received some welcome news with the return of Jason Heyden and Matt Neal from OHL camps. Heyden was with the Owen Sound Attack while Neal returned from the London Knights.

The Spirit will be holding its annual Terry Fox car wash Saturday at Houston Ford from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

All Spirit players will be on hand with proceeds going to the Terry Fox Foundation.

NOTEBOOK: Former Spirit net-minder Neil Conway is back in the Ontario Hockey League with the Oshawa Generals. The 20-year-old Cleveland, Ohio, native played last year with the Green Bay Gamblers of the United States Hockey League. Prior to his stay in Green Bay, he was with the Owen Sound Attack. Conway played for the Spirit as a 15-year-old before Hockey Canada barred under-agers from Jr. A. The Generals needed a veteran goalkeeper after Daryl Borden, 19, suddenly left the club for St. Mary's Jr. B and college this summer.

- with files from Jim Mason

Mennos win first game of playoffs

The Stouffville Mennos began their best-of-three Oshawa City and District Fastball League quarter-finals by edging the host Oshawa Intermediates 6-5 Tuesday.

The Mennos jumped out to a 2-0 lead in their first trip to the plate when Rich Burkholder doubled and scored on a triple by Dale Boadway. A fielder's choice would eventually score Boadway.

The Intermediates cut the Mennos' lead to 2-1 in the second inning on a solo homer from pitcher Ryan Swift.

But a single by Burkholder, triple from Boadway, single by Chris Burkholder along with an Intermediates' error and single by Brett Boyd generated three runs to stake the Mennos to what appeared to be a commanding 5-1 advantage in the third inning.

HOME-FIELD ADVANTAGE

Wrong.

The lead was short-lived as the Intermediates stormed back to tie the game in the fourth inning.

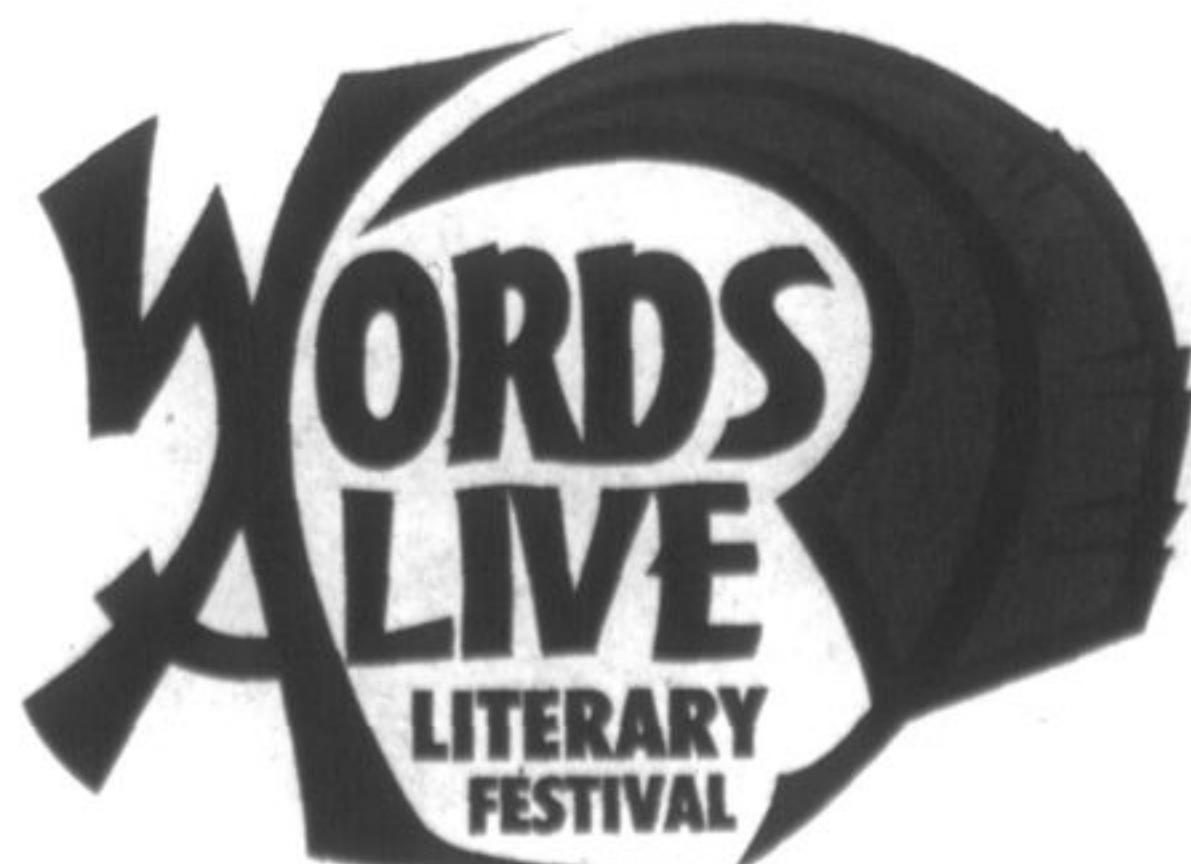
With the score knotted at 5-5 in the fifth inning, the Mennos scored what would be the game-winning run when Jeff Boadway tripled and scored on a double by Boyd.

Greg Dalgarno came in relief of starter Jay Nesbitt in the fourth inning and blanked the Intermediates to earn the win.

The Mennos can wrap up the series tonight in Memorial Park at 8:30 p.m.

A third game, if necessary, would return to Memorial Park. It's tentatively scheduled for Sept. 11.

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